SAMUEL HANNAGID, THE MAN, THE SOLDIER, THE POLITICIAN *

By JEFIM SCHIRMANN

The Young Patrician

The full name of the man who is known to history under the title of his office as Hannagid was Abu-Ibrahim Samuel ben Yosef Halevi ibn Nagrela.[1] His family originated from ancient Merida, known also as the birthplace of Abitor; after the destruction of this city they moved to Cordova where Samuel was born in the year 993. His childhood was free from material cares and he enjoyed an excellent education. As a mature man he liked to recall the warm affection and the careful education which his parents had bestowed on him;[2] but he was particularly devoted to his elder brother Isaac, with whom he grew up and went to school[3] and whom he respected as much as his father. The course of studies of young Samuel included almost every branch of science taught in those days. He was later active productively in all fields except philosophy and medicine. A later source refers to an encomium which he is supposed to have composed in seven languages in honor of King Habbus of Granada.[4] Whether this statement is true and thus to be taken as evidence of the linguistic attainments of the Nagid remains a matter of doubt.

The Arabic lore of the Nagid was, of course, deep and extensive. The Koran and Arabic philosophy were as familiar to him as to a Moslem, and an Arab witness claims that he used formal Moslem salutations in his

* This essay constitutes a chapter from a forthcoming comprehensive work on the history of Hebrew poetry in Spain.

1 Abdallah, king of Granada, usually calls him Abu Ibrahaim in his *Memoirs*. *Cf.* Lévi-Provencal, E., "Deux nouveaux fragments des 'Mémoires du roi ziride 'Abd Allah de Grenade'" in *Al-Andalus,* vol. vi (Madrid 1941) 241-45. A Spanish translation of this highly interesting work (by E. García-Gómez and E. Lévi-Provencal) is now in press. The family name Nagrela is explained by G. Colin as Arabic "naghra" (the crow) with the romance diminutive ending "ela (illa)." *Cf. Al-Andalus,* vol. iii, p. 244, note 23. According to S. M. Stern it is a diminutive form of Spanish "negra" (negress).

2 *Diwan* of Shemuel Hannaghid, edited by David Solomon Sassoon (Oxford 1934) First Section (called in this edition wrongly "Ben Tehillim" instead of "Diwan") No. 91, v. 17-19.

3 *L.c.,* No. 37, v. 31-32.

4 Se'adyah ibn Dannan (15th cent.) in H. Edelman's *Hemdah genuzah* (Koenigsberg 1856) p. 29.

letters.[5] This indicates a remarkable adaptation to his environment. The notable contrast which was to mark the life of the Nagid as a result of adaptation to his environment on the one hand, and of his loyalty to Jewish tradition on the other, also was revealed in his Hebrew studies and creative work. Thus, on the one hand there were his intensive halakhic studies under Rabbi Hanokh ben Moshe in Cordova and his later work in this field which eventually acquired for him the reputation of the greatest Talmudic scholar in Spain; on the other hand, there was in him a distinct touch of worldliness, displayed more particularly in his poetry. The definite preference he displayed for love poems would have been hardly conceivable for an orthodox Jew before his time.

From the beginning the young patrician from Cordova showed extraordinary poise. There was in him no trace of the humility and the repressed passions of a *galut* Jew. He was proud not only of his attainments and achievements but also of his heritage. He never tired of talking of his Levitic origin and it was to this fact of birth that he ascribed his gifts as a poet.[6] The self-assurance of the Nagid had deeply religious roots, and his conception of the relationship between God and himself was highly personal. Providence, he felt, had chosen him to make him worthy of the greatest wonders and graces, and a completely irrational faith in his calling accompanied him through life. In his early youth he had a vision in a dream which he often recalled to the end of his days. The archangels Michael and Gabriel appeared to him and promised him divine protection whenever he was in need: the former would protect him against the perils of water, the latter against the dangers of fire. This message also appeared to him as a sword which would deflect other swords threatening him:

> I will cling to this message as to a sword in my hand
> Should I see swords, I will lean on Thy sword.[7]

Samuel remembers this vision when he travels in danger, when he feels menaced by enemies, when he finds himself in the tumult of battle.[8]

Samuel's entire life appeared to him to be a fulfillment of this promise. The various phases of his existence seemed to him to be stages of consistent development leading to a high pinnacle.[9] But to what pinnacle? Not

5 *Cf.* the statement of Ibn Haiyan quoted at the end of this article.
6 *Diwan,* No. 59, v. 39-42.
7 *L.c.,* No. 180.
8 *L.c.,* No. 10, v. 88-89; 29, 4-6; 59, 10.
9 The introduction of *Diwan* No. 91 gives a remarkable picture of his rising to power.

only within the Jewish community, for here he already had attained a prominent position. He lacked no opportunity to acquire knowledge, to travel a great deal, even venturing on sea voyages which were rather unusual in the Middle Ages. An adventure of his youth, experienced in the company of merchants upon the sea, moved him to write a poem.[10] He was wealthy, apparently as a result of successful business transactions, and could afford to help needy writers such as his friend Ibn Khalfun. But neither the possession of wealth nor the possibility to gratify his intellectual interests satisfied him. A poem written in the year 1013 voices the passions that stirred his soul:

> There are friends who do evil and not good
> Of rude shape and vulgar thoughts;
> They believed that I go forth and tear myself
> From rest to roving to increase my possessions . . . .
> Should one whose soul is beaming
> And anxious to rise like the moon . . . .
> Check himself until he can act and his deeds be
> Known and till he does far more than rumor reports?[11]

These words seem to be the expression of a tremendous urge for action which cannot yet fully exert itself. In the year 1011 the Nagid met his countryman, the Arab poet, theologian and historian Ibn Hazm. The vast culture and talent of the latter could certainly compare with those of the Nagid and he seems to have been the highest exponent of the Spanish-Moslem culture of his time. The two men were no more than twenty (they were born in the same year) but they discussed matters pertaining to Bible criticism and theology which presupposed the highest degree of learning in religious writings. Ibn Hazm recorded his colloquies with his Jewish partner in his great work on religions and sects. With regard to *Genesis* 49: 10 "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be," Ibn Hazm asserted that there had been no descendants of King David since the time of Zerubbabel. The Nagid retorted that the Exilarchs were from the lineage of Judah and wielded actual power. Ibn Hazm replied that this was not true; for the Exilarch had had no power over the Jews, let alone over anyone else; he only had a title without real value. We learn from Ibn Hazm that his opponent interpreted the mysterious verse

[10] *L.c.*, No. 8.
[11] *L.c.*, No. 15, v. 5-6, 10-12.

"until Shiloh come" as referring to himself![12] If this is true, it shows more surprisingly than do the poems of the Nagid the kind of brilliant future which his imagination held out to him.

The First Crisis, the Flight from Cordova (1013)

Several grave strokes of fate were in store for Samuel, however. The central power in Cordova, which held together the whole of Moslem Spain, was shaken by internal dissensions and increasingly frequent changes of government and finally broke down. The country was divided into several states and a terrible fate befell the capital as it was conquered, looted and destroyed by hordes of Berbers. Moses ibn Ezra relates: "There followed in Spain a terrible war the like of which had never been known and which at the end of the century concerned was called the Berber War. It was a time of suffering and misfortune; starvation and want were rampant in the cities, doom knocked at the gates of the government and smote Cordova, the capital. The city suffered many visitations and finally was destroyed or as good as destroyed. There was a decline of all science for no scholars were left, and people were absorbed by their worries."[13]

Among the countless refugees who scattered to the four winds of heaven was the Nagid as well as his former opponent Ibn Hazm. Samuel lost his fortune. Thirty-three years later, when he had reached the summit of power, he saw a sandy passage which he had rushed by, staff in hand, on his flight from Cordova, and he thought with gratification of the kind turn fate had taken for him.[14] But even at that time he was anything but despondent, and the self-assured words quoted below were spoken in those difficult days. He was ready to do anything, to expose himself to danger, to cross deserts and seas to attain the fame he craved for.

> I will wander till I have risen and reached
> An eminence which will be known for evermore.[15]

He did, in fact, travel far and wide. He paced the earth from one end to the other, so that, as he puts it, his legs seemed to him to have become two

12 I. Goldziher in Kobak's *Jeschurun*, vol. viii (1871); *idem* in *Revue des études juives*, vol. viii (1884) 125. Ibn Hazm's controversy on the Old Testament is reproduced in Spanish translation in M. Asin Palacios' *Abraham de Cordoba* (Madrid 1927) p. 128.

13 According to the Hebrew translation of Ibn Ezra's Arabic book on Hebrew poetry by B. S. Halper, *Shirat Yisrael* (Leipzig 1924) p. 65.

14 *Diwan*, No. 93.

15 *L.c.*, No. 15, v. 16.

yardsticks. In the course of his peregrinations he came among hostile people and longed for rescue from this predicament.[16]

The Dark Spell; the Rise in the Service of the State

The years following his flight from Cordova form the most obscure period in the life of the Nagid. The only available source for that period is the chronicle of Ibn Daud, but it is obviously inaccurate in many essential points. According to Ibn Daud the Nagid had settled in Malaga, where he opened a shop in the neighborhood of the house of Ibn Al'Arif, the vizier of King Habbus of Granada. Samuel was engaged by a servant of Ibn Al'Arif to write letters for her to her master and these letters, recounts Ibn Daud, won the admiration of the vizier, who wanted to know who the writer was. On learning of Samuel's identity the vizier took the Nagid into his service as an adviser on all matters concerned with the administration of the state. On his deathbed Ibn Al'Arif is said to have told the king that he owed all his success to the advice of the unknown Jew and he asked the king to appoint Samuel to his office.[17] The king did in fact appoint Samuel as his minister. The dates given by Ibn Daud for these events appear to be erroneous.[18] It appears more likely that Samuel rose gradually to his high office after overcoming all sorts of obstacles. This assumption is fully borne out by the memoirs of Abdallah. Certain details related by Ibn Daud may nevertheless be correct, as for instance the significance of the art of writing of the Nagid for his success. The Nagid composed several epigrams to glorify the pen, one of which was still quoted a hundred years later by Ibn Tibbon in his will. In it he enjoined his son to cultivate the Arabic art of writing. "For you know what the Nagid said of the high esteem which this art had won for him."[19]

At that time a Jew could enter the service of the state only as a physician or financial expert. Even before the accession of Habbus the Nagid had worked as a financier, had acquired great wealth and occupied a reputable office, perhaps that of tax collector among the Jews. Whatever

16 *L.c.*, No. 14, v. 12, 21-23, 25-26.

17 In his *Sefer haqqabbalah*, ed. by A. Neubauer, in *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles* (Oxford 1887) vol. i, p. 71-74.

18 *Shirat Yisrael*, p. 68, *Cf.*, the discussion of this question in *Zion*, vol. i (1936) 266-67, vol. ii (1937) 185-86 by J. Schirmann and H. Lichtenstein.

19 *Diwan*, Second Section: "Ben Mishle," No. 884 and D. S. Sassoon's Introduction p. x. *Cf.* also S. Abramson's edition of "Ben Mishle" (Tel-Aviv 1948) p. 272, 433.

that office may have been, the Nagid was in charge of several districts in the kingdom. He was, however, relieved of this office in 1020 under rather obscure circumstances. His old friend Ibn Khalfun addressed a comforting letter to him on this occasion, with two poems.[20] The affliction of the Nagid, he wrote, proved only that the reward of the Lord would later on be all the greater. The Nagid, he said, should mercilessly pursue and kill his enemies, for serpents and scorpions knew nothing of love. The reply of the Nagid showed remarkable self-control. His adversaries, he said, may be ruined but only by the hand of God; in his eyes they are not serpents but miserable worms. The dignity that he had possessed was a heavy burden anyway, and be it as it may, his adversaries can talk no more.[21] He was sure that his time would come. The turning point came during the reign of Habbus when, according to Abdallah, the Nagid was at first allowed to act as secretary to the king's minister, Abu-al'Abbas (perhaps Ibn Al'Arif mentioned by Ibn Daud?). After the demise of his master, the Nagid, by dint of energy and clever handling of the ruler, pushed aside his rival, the young son of the late minister, and ocuppied his office.[22]

Samuel became the leading figure in the state. His proud words to the effect that the adversary hated him because he could see

> My influence with the King and that all
> State affairs and plans are decided upon by me
> And that a decision not taken by me is no decision.[23]

were thus fully confirmed. They were likewise confirmed by the testimony of the Arabic historian Ibn Idhari, who wrote: "And the king raised him above every other rank and dignity."[24] So it came to pass that the Jews who had always had much influence in Granada and had access to the court, now further strengthened their position within the state.

The Nagid must have had to no small degree the temperament of a gambler and an adventurer. What, besides an urge for action, vanity and a craving for power could have driven him to venture upon the dangerous road of state service? He certainly wished to protect the Spanish Jews in their tragically uncertain position, and he felt carried and driven by

20 *Cf.* my remarks in *Zion* (see note 18) and in *Tarbiz,* vol. vii (1936) 300-301.

21 *Diwan,* No. 71; 72, v. 12, 22-23.

22 *Al-Andalus,* vol. vi, p. 241.

23 *Diwan,* No. 10, v. 13-14.

24 Ibn 'Idhari, al-Bayan al-Mugrib, Tome troisième . . . publié . . . par Lévi-Provencal (Paris 1930) p. 264.

the aspirations and longings of his people to climb higher and higher. The higher the responsibilities undertaken by an individual, the greater was the danger for the community bound to him in fortune and misfortune. The Nagid was fully aware of the perils of his position. But he could not resist temptation; within the cultural and economic spheres of his own community he had attained the highest dignities, but his urge for power, his talent for statesmanship, perhaps also his military gifts, all these craved satisfaction. In a poem which is significant as a human document he endeavors to invalidate the objections of a real or imaginary opponent who pointed out the questionable character of his position.

He put me to rights because I dwell in the company of kings –
I answered him: this is my lot and fate!
He sought to frighten me with their cruelty and wrath
I answered him: God is my shelter and my hope!
He spoke to me: What do you seek in battles?
I answered:
My deathplace and my tomb have already been chosen for me.

A man who resists temptation is just as unprotected from sudden death as he who yields to it. And so he says to his opponent: Let it be. Maybe I will have luck.

Will it be good for me to miss my chance
And not enjoy my lot and share?[26]

Only the collapse of the state of Cordova could have afforded this Jew the chance of a unique ascent to power. The country split into several states ruled by Arab, Berber and Slav princes, who fought one another. A Jewish official belonged to neither of the conflicting parties; he was a creature of the prince and had every reason to serve him loyally. Moreover, at the time of the Nagid, Granada, the capital, was populated mostly by Jews. Familiar with the conditions of the city, the Nagid was able to collect taxes efficiently from his co-religionists and fill the chests of the state.[27]

In the course of his activity at the court he developed other important talents which eventually made him the highest dignitary of the kingdom. It

[25] *Cf.* the text in Brody-Albrecht, *The New-Hebrew School of Poets of the Spanish-Arabian Epoch* (London 1906) p. 5, v. 7-12.
[26] *Diwan,* No. 59, v. 7-9, 17.
[27] *Cf.* the most relevant observations of Abdallah on this subject in *Al-Andalus,* vol. vi, p. 241-42.

is, however, doubtful whether he reached the height of his power during the reign of Habbus. The death of this king in the year 1038 led to another severe crisis in the life of the Nagid. A split occurred at the court with regard to the succession to the throne. The majority of the Berber leaders as well as three of the most respected Jews of Granada were in favor of the younger son of the deceased. The Nagid supported the elder son, Badis, and his candidate prevailed. The younger son voluntarily renounced the throne, and although he later regretted this step, Badis knew how to render him harmless through medical treatment of a peculiar nature. The Berber courtiers had to yield reluctantly, and from then on the repute of the Nagid rose tremendously.[28] He knew how to win the good graces of the wanton and unlovable Badis by saving his life soon after his accession to the throne. A plot had been hatched at court for the purpose of removing Badis from the throne and replacing him by his cousin Yaddair. Strangely enough the conspirators revealed their plan to the Nagid who pretended he was with them and offered them his house as a meeting place. He himself made a speech, permitting himself the jest of using a solemn form of address with which Moslem ministers address God. He said: "Thou who seeest and art not seen," meaning the hidden King Badis. The plot, of course, came to nought.[29]

Thus the Nagid knew how to make himself indispensable and succeeded in holding his ground despite the appalling intrigues against him at the royal palace. The memoirs of Abdallah provide a vivid description of the dangerous plots surrounding a courtier in Granada in those days. In the collection of aphorisms of the Nagid, *Ben Mishle*, there are many sayings about the relationship between an individual and his king, composed in part to follow a traditional theme treated in the Bible (*Proverbs*) and in several Arabic collections (*e.g.* the *Choice of Pearls*). But the restraint and cynicism with which the theme is sometimes treated by the Nagid show the influence of personal experience.[30]

The Military Leader

The military career of the Nagid offers an even more interesting phychological problem. While it is true that Jews fought occasionally

28 These events are related only in Ibn Daud's Chronicle (see note 17).
29 Abdallah's "Memoirs" *Al-Andalus l.c.*, p. 241.
30 *Cf.* the summary of these sayings in S. Abramson's edition (see note 19), Introduction 241-42.

during the post-exilic period, it cannot be claimed that they ever plied the art of war professionally, greatly differing in this respect from the Arabs, the Berbers and the Spaniards, who possessed an age-long military tradition and an upper class of professional warriors. Nevertheless, the Nagid became a professional military leader; he spent a large part of his life in the field, several months practically every year. Between the years 1038 and 1056 there were only two years during which he conducted no war. According to references in the *Diwan*, the campaigns of the Nagid began in the year 1038, that is to say in the year of the accession of Badis. Incidentally, this circumstance seems to indicate that it was only about that time that he attained the highest position in the state.[31]

There is no allusion in the works of Arabic historians to the fact that the Jewish vizier had fought in the field or commanded troops; but it is understandable that the chroniclers were loath to record this, since the conduct of war, the rightful domain of Moslem nobility, was in this instance in charge of a heretic. In a warlike state such as Granada was, the supreme command was in the hands of the king who, however, was assisted by a number of generals. It is claimed by Ibn Daud that the king asked the dying Ibn Al'Arif the question: "What am I to do and who will advise me in the wars which rage about me?"[32] for military command was part and parcel of the duties incumbent upon the vizier. Although Moses ibn Ezra notes that the Nagid served the state in the financial and military fields,[33] it is to the poet himself that we owe all the information available respecting this particular aspect of his activities. He gives it freely, and it is interesting to note that he seldom emphasizes his own leading part. The military operations are described in the titles of poems with introductory phrases in the plural, such as "We took the field," "We overran," and sometimes there is a reference to "the order of the king." Samuel may therefore often have shared the command with other leaders but he was certainly in supreme control, and in one of his poems he refers specifically to the thousands of soldiers who obeyed his orders.[34] A Jew at the head of a Moslem army was even more remarkable than a Jewish minister; the only successor to

31 On the military career of the Nagid, *cf.* my Hebrew article "The Wars of Shemuel Hannagid" in *Zion*, vol. i (1936) 261-83, 359-76; vol. ii (1937) 185-87.

32 *L.c.*, p. 72.

33 His words on this subject have not been translated by Halper. They are quoted in my article "Le diwan de Samu'el Hannagid considéré comme source pour l'histoire espagnole," in *Hespéris*, vol. xxxv (1950) 167 note 4.

34 *Diwan*, No. 93, v. 2.

the Nagid in this capacity seems to have been his son Yehosef. A recently discovered poem praises the war successes of Yehosef.[35]

Since the Nagid owed his unique position to the king the enemies of the latter were also his own personal enemies. As military chief he had the opportunity to humiliate them and to revenge himself upon them.[36] His successes in warfare were not only a matter for personal rejoicing; he regarded it as a triumph of the whole Jewish community over its adversaries. This conception was entirely justified and did not proceed from self-exaltation. In one of his first war poems Samuel says of his deadly enemy Ibn Abbas:

> And not me alone did he seek to destroy
> With the slanderous words which he had invented;
> But he purposed to exterminate in God's community
> Children and grandchildren, delivering and pregnant women.[37]

During his campaign against the army of Seville he keeps in mind the miserable condition of the Jews in the country of the enemy. We learn from his words that the Sevillans intended to enslave the Jews and destroy Jewish Granada, "a city and mother in Israel."

> In their land (in Seville) the wicked are powerful
> The stones of their slings lapidate the sons of the Living God,
> Against them they have planned their ranks and taken arms
> and won fetters
> To destroy a mother in Israel, to exterminate
> Men and likewise infants and small children . . . .
>
> I remembered what their community was scheming
> Against my humiliated and unhappy people.
> The wicked, they have divided their loot in advance
> And drawn lots (for their share).[38]

The victories of the Nagid spelled success for the Jewish people as a whole and his war poems meant much more than mere description of personally sustained dangers and subsequent joy. Sometimes a victory

35 *Shirat Yisrael,* p. 68; the poem on Yehosef the Conqueror of Towns was published in *Haaretz* (Tel-Aviv) on September 29, 1939, and reprinted in the anthology *Mibhar hashibim* (Tel-Aviv 1948) p. 75-76.
36 *Diwan,* No. 91, v. 31-33.
37 *L.c.,* No. 10, v. 22-23.
38 *L.c.,* No. 29, v. 25-28, 55-56.

seemed to him so important that he wished to have it celebrated as a popular feast, a new Purim.[39] His war descriptions in verse were always meant to be recited and to be spread far and wide among the people and not in Spain alone. Some of his poems were written specifically for Babylonian authorities[40] and they reached North Africa, as proved by the numerous fragments of his *Diwan* preserved in the Egyptian Geniza.

The attitude of the poet to war is a remarkable revelation of the mentality of his non-Jewish environment. Occasionally he is sick of warfare and feels nauseated with the ever-recurring campaigns, as in the following lines:

> I am disgusted with the service of kings
> Ever ready for battle.[41]

Far more often he is intoxicated with the thrilling experience of battle and he revels in the moments when the bestial instincts of man are let loose. What savage joy he takes in the gory spectacle, with what sarcasm he deals with fleeing, wounded or fallen enemies. A gruesome climax is reached in these poems when animals and birds of prey are brought into action and their mangling of the corpses is fully described and relished. It may hardly be pleaded that the poet was following the literary patterns of ancient Arabic war poetry; he did, but up to a point. Only too often, however, did the Nagid regard victories as his personal successes and his exultation over fallen enemies certainly expresses his innermost feelings. Even at the grave of his brother he laments the fact that he would no longer be able to tell him about his latest successes in war.

The violent hate of which the poet was capable is shown particularly in the lines he wrote on the fall of his adversary Ibn Abi Musa. A messenger tells him of the death of his adversary and he is glad to hear that the latter's mangled body was thrown into the street. The messenger urges the Nagid to dance and to clap his hands. The Nagid rewards him for his message and muses as follows:[42] Ibn Musa longed for the previously killed adversary of the Nagid, Ibn Abbas, and therefore followed him into the underworld. Ibn Abbas should be glad to see his new companion and may they break each other's rope-wound heads. The Nagid asks the

39 *L.c.*, No. 10, v. 145. This poem, on the defeat of Zuhayr and Ibn Abbas, contains many allusions to the Esther Scroll.
40 *E.g.*, No. 143 and 144.
41 *L.c.*, No. 86, v. 16.
42 *Lc.*, No. 50, v. 4.

grave-digger to dig an especially deep grave for the dead man. It should be noted that the author specifically requests that this piece be written down, be read on the Sabbath and be taught to children! In order to follow the dangerous path of the highest state official and military leader it was necessary to be harsh and relentless, for one's life was in constant jeopardy.[43]

One cannot but admire the composure and intellectual elasticity which enabled the Nagid to carry on his literary pursuits during military campaigns. Many of his poems and perhaps other works were written or conceived while in camp, before or after battle. During the campaigns he supervised the education of his beloved son Yehosef. One of his poems was improvised directly before a battle and was intended to take the place of the evening (*minha*) service for which there was no time.[44]

The Wantonness of the Nagid: his Polemics against Islam

It must have been disconcerting self-assurance – one might almost say his wantonness – that led the Jewish minister to do something which might have ended in disaster. He wrote an anti-Islam dissertation on the internal contradictions of the Koran. Jews had written religious polemics but these were designed for their own circle of readers or were very carefully worded. Here, however, was a direct attack against the most sacred book of Islam, and the Nagid's challenge was obviously accessible to Moslems as well as to Jews. The original text of this work is not available but its existence has been proved and its contents are partly known from a recently discovered counter-statement by Ibn Hazm, the Nagid's old friend. This booklet is entitled "Rejoinder of Abu Muhammad ibn Hazm to Ibn Nagrela the Jew, May God Curse Him!"[45] We learn from it that Ibn Hazm had also been unable to secure the Nagid's paper, but had become acquainted with it through the counter-statement of another Moslem, which he thereupon studied very closely. This work appeared inadequate to him and so Ibn Hazm wrote another refutation of the Nagid's essay. He answers the attacks of the Jew point by point and parries by listing a far larger number of contradictions in the Old Testament and incidentally in post-Biblical Jewish writings.

[43] *L.c.*, No. 32 (on the teaching of this poem to children etc. v. 54-56). *Cf.* also the bloodthirsty mood in the prayer No. 178, v. 2.

[44] *L.c.*, No. 27.

[45] This work was discovered and extracts of it were published by E. García-Gómez, "Polémica religiosa entre Ibn Hazm e Ibn al-Nagrila," in *Al-Andalus*, vol. iv (1936) 1-28.

Ibn Hazm's work is no longer of interest today except for the historian engaged in the study of religious disputes between Jews and other believers. What matters for us is the spirit in which the answer of Ibn Hazm was written. With quotations put together rather casually and incoherently, the book conveys the impression of a pamphlet hastily written in a fit of anger and envy. Ibn Hazm had dabbled in politics in his youth. He failed after a short time and spent most of his life in retirement, solely devoted to writing. He now saw the heretical Jew succeeding brilliantly in the field which had been denied to him, a true believing Moslem. There is, therefore, much personal resentment behind his words, but these are undoubtedly nurtured by a mood which was shared by many of his contemporaries. What matters are not so much the vulgar insults showered upon the Nagid; personal invective was common in medieval controversies and abounds also in Jewish writings. For us the paper is of interest as a contemporary document, for its introduction and its conclusion contain a flaming indictment of the king of Granada, the Jewish statesman and all his co-religionists. The ungodly king is denounced for being concerned only with earthly possessions instead of protecting the true religion for the sake of salvation. Meanwhile the miserable representatives of the nation of "clients" laid their hands upon the affairs of the state.

> A man has arisen [writes Ibn Hazm] who is jaundiced with hate for our Prophet (may God bless and keep him!). He is one of the heretics and unbelievers who hide in the most vulgar religion and the most abject sect within the Jewish community . . . . His satisfaction loosened his tongue and his insolence was given free rein; his despicable soul is filled with pride in his great wealth. Silver and gold heaped in his house excited his vile desires and he wrote a book with a view to specifying the contradictions in the words of God (may He be blessed!), in the Koran.

The conclusion of the pamphlet is even more vehement. The humiliation of the Jews, according to Ibn Hazm, is a commandment, and the sufferings of exile were inflicted upon them by God. The sinful protector of the accursed people, therefore, exposes himself to the worst punishments. He goes on to say:

> Indeed strong is my hope and justified my wish that God (may He be blessed!) will inflict upon the man who let the Jews come near him and made them his courtiers and trusted servants the things which he destined for the Jews themselves. May he hear the words of God [here follow verses from the Koran directed against intercourse with Jews and Christians] . . . . As to the Moslem king who was aware of all this and yet brought

> Jews near to his person and frequented them, he deserves (provided God wills it) to be befallen with the contempt, the poverty, the humiliation, the abjection and the shame meant for them in this world, besides the glowing punishment awaiting them in the next world. He who committed this should share with them what God (may He be blessed!) had promised in their Torah, in the fifth book, where he spoke unto them . . . . [here follow in Arabic the verses of malediction, *Deuteronomy* 28:15-57] . . . Let the king stay far away from these impure, evil-smelling, unclean people, upon whom God has inflicted curse and malediction, contempt and abasement, infamy, ire, degradation and vileness as upon no other people. Know that the garments with which God has clothed them are more dangerous than war and more contagious than leprosy.[46]

It may be said that this outburst of hate leads in a direct line to the goading song of Abu-Ishaq which ten years after the death of the Nagid brought about the first large scale pogrom in Moslem Spain.[47] Anti-Jewish feelings are far more frequent in Arabic writings than the tolerant tone such as we know it from the chapter on Jews in Ibn Said's "Tabaqat al-umam."[48] But there is also an often quoted pro-Jewish poem which the Arabic poet Munfatil is supposed to have recited in honor of the Nagid. It contains the following passage:

> Instead of seeking God's pleasure by kissing the black stone in Mecca [the Moslems] should kiss thy hands; for they give luck. Thanks to thee I received here all that I wished, and I hope that through thy [intercession] my desires will be fulfilled in the next world. When I dwell with thee and thy people I often confess the religion which prescribes the observance of the Sabbath – when I am among my own people I confess it secretly.[49]

This does not seem to be more than a clever attempt of a court poet to flatter his wealthy Jewish protector.

The Title of Nagid; his Position in the Jewish Community

We have quoted the embittered words of Ibn Hazm about the tremendous wealth of the Nagid which he claims had made him vainglorious. The Nagid was really very rich and in his peculiar way he speaks with

46 *L.c.*, p. 24-25, 26-27.

47 *Cf.* R. Dozy, *Recherches sur l'histoire et la littérature de l'Espagne* . . . vol. i 3d ed. (1881) p. 282-94; J. Schirmann, in *Mozenayim*, vol. viii (1939) 53-55. A new critical edition of this poem was given by E. García-Gómez, *Un alfaqui espanol - Abu Ishak de Elvira*, (Madrid 1944).

48 *Cf.* J. Finkel, "An Eleventh Century Source for the History of Jewish Scientists . . . ," in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s. vol. xviii (1927) 45-54.

49 Dozy, *Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne* (Leyden 1932) vol. iii, p. 20-21.

great pride of this circumstance, for in this too he perceives a sign of God's particular favor for him. He does not attempt to conceal what might arouse the envy of his fellow men. He addresses himself as follows in a poem:

> (You have) much wealth, as God may give it, silver
> (as plentiful) as trees in the forest and gold as stones.
> Raiments from Cyssus and purple and many-colored fabrics
> And jewels are worn in your house.[50]

It was natural that a man financially so independent and endowed with such an unusual gift of leadership should hold the highest position within his own community. In fact, even before he had reached the summit of power at court, he was, if we may believe Ibn Daud, appointed Nagid in the year 1027, and was the first holder of this title in Spain.[51] Ibn Shaprut and Ibn Djau, the two highest Jewish dignitaries before him, held the title of Nasi, and it cannot be said exactly why a new title was created and whether it was connected with any new function. With regard to Ibn Djau, Ibn Daud states specifically as follows:

> [The king] drew up a document for him which raised him above all Jewish communities from Segelmessa to the river of Duero which flows at the border of his kingdom. He empowered him to be judge over all of them, to appoint all officials at his pleasure and to collect all taxes and impositions incumbent upon them. He placed at his disposal eighteen of his eunuchs in rich clothes, and allowed him to drive in his ceremonial coach. Thereupon all the [Jewish] inhabitants of Cordova old and young forgathered and drew up for him a *"Nesiut"* document which said: Rule over us, you, your son and also your grandson.[52]

The title of Nagid occurs for the first time in the tenth century in northern Africa, in Egypt and Kairuwan;[53] it designates the highest representative of Jewry before the government, and it was translated into Arabic as *"Ra'is al-yahud."* The title of Nasi may have become unpopular, having been brought into disrepute by a series of unworthy holders, the Babylonian Exilarchs; this dignity, originally reserved for the descendants of David alone, eventually became something that any clever and wealthy man

50 *Diwan,* No. 91, v. 28-29. *Cf.* also 25, v. 12 and 98, v. 42.
51 Ibn Daud, *l.c.,* p. 72.
52 *L.c.,* p. 75.
53 On the origin of this title *cf.* D. Neustadt, in *Zion,* vol. iv (1939) 126-49.

could purchase.[54] It may be also that the Nagid who took the title of Exilarch very seriously – to wit the discussion with Ibn Hazm – was, as a non Davidite, loath to hold it.

The authority of the Nagid among the Jews extended far beyond the frontiers of the kingdom of Granada. He supported his co-religionists in all the other Spanish lands, Morocco, Tunis, Egypt and Sicily, and he was even in contact with the Babylonian academy and the Jewish notables of Jerusalem. He paid regularly for oil in the synagogues of Jerusalem and employed scribes to transcribe copies of the Mishna and Talmud which he placed at the disposal of impecunious students everywhere.[55] But he did not wish to be known merely as a rich patron. The Jewish Spain was at the time but a very young seat of learning and he, the Spaniard, nurtured the ambition to rank as an equal among the authorities of the venerable schools of the east. Hence the lines in a poem addressed to the Babylonian Hizkiyya:

> Yours is the kingdom, mine is the prophecy, only,
> You and we may be regarded as examples in this world.[56]

There was probably no well-known teacher of the law in his time with whom he did not correspond. He married his son Yehosef to the daughter of the famous Nissim ben Jacob of Kairuwan. When the bride arrived, however, she disappointed the bridegroom, according to Ibn Daud, "for she was almost a dwarf."[57] He took care that the memory of the dead teachers of the law be celebrated in Spain. Upon the death of Rabbi Hushiel in Kairuwan he arranged mourning ceremonies in Granada and Lucena and sent special letters to Cordova and other cities with the request that the same should be done.[58] He himself composed an elaborate official elegy on the death of Hayya, the greaest Gaon of his time;[59] he also requested another former student of the deceased, the judge Masliah Albassaq from Sicily to send him a biography of his teacher, just as in his time Ibn Shaprut had sent for a biography of the Gaon Saadya.[60]

54 Ibn Daud, *l.c.*, p. 67.
55 According to Ibn Daud, p. 72-73.
56 *Diwan,* No. 145, v. 44, similar also 57, v. 27.
57 *L.c.*, p. 73.
58 *Cf.* Kaufmann, D., *Gesammelte Schriften,* vol. iii (1915) p. 60.
59 *Diwan,* No. 11; also in H. Brody's edition of the Nagid's Poems (Warsaw 1910) no. 1.
60 Ibn Daud, *l.c.*

As guardian of religious tradition, Samuel took stern action against the Karaites, the powerful sect which had penetrated into Spain from the East; it apparently had not a few followers there, so that at the end of the eleventh century it became the object of a regular persecution on the part of the Rabbanites.[61] In his attitude towards the Karaites the Nagid displayed a vehemence and an agressiveness mostly to be found in the Jewish authors who wrote about the sect in the East or in Spain. Was the sect really so powerful and militant? One is rather inclined to see in the attitude of the Rabbanites a token of the lack of tolerance prevalent at the time. According to the Nagid's own words, there were some Karaites only in a few villages at the frontier of Christian Spain, and they sought to conceal their religious views, put wise by the experience of their forefathers, some of whom had been beaten to death by the Spanish Rabbanites.[62]

With his widely spanned religious and national interests and close connection with the rest of the Jewish world, it is remarkable how little the problem of the *galut* and the yearning for Zion are echoed in Samuel's verse. It is possible that most of his statements on this subject have been lost. But in the voluminous collection of his poems which have been preserved this subject is touched on only in the introductions to a few pieces and in a short poem in which he laments the destruction and desecration of Zion and expresses a longing for the messianic era.[63] There is nothing of the depth of a Gabirol or a Yehuda Halevi. We find, however, in his verses an interesting parallel to a passage in the letter to the Khazar king by his great predecessor in the state service, Hasdai ibn Shaprut. The Nagid too harbored the hope that the great miracle of redemption would occur in his time and he was prepared to give up all the honors and riches in Spain to hasten to a newly revived Zion. There, he would attend to the service of the Temple as a simple Levite and be content at that.[64]

The Writer; his Relations with the Poets and Scholars of his Time

Samuel took a keen interest in a great variety of things besides his official duties. He possessed a valuable library,[65] he engaged in the criticism of texts, made in his own hand an exceptionally correct copy of the

61 *L.c.*, p. 79.
62 *Cf.* Yehuda Albargeloni, *Sefer haittim*, p. 267, who quotes the Nagid.
63 *Diwan*, No. 104, 105, 111, 147.
64 *L.c.*, No. 105, v. 9-12, 17.
65 Plundered and destroyed when his son Yehosef was murdered by the mob of Granada (1066), Ibn Daud p. 74.

Old Testament,[66] and revised the well-known *Yosippon*.[67] Of his halakhic writings only a few fragments have come down to us, besides an introduction to the Talmud whose authorship is rather questionable. They show, however, that in this field too he wrote abundantly and had completed at least one voluminous work under the title *Hilkhata gibarvata*.[68] His philological research work to which he was particularly devoted and which is of importance for the understanding of his poems was even more extensive. Of this too only fragments and quotations are extant. His great philological work, the *Kitab ul-istighna*, which afforded a kind of concordance to the whole of the Bible, reveals him to be a very sensitive and careful student who endeavors to explain the words of the Bible in the most simple way, successfully applying to this task his extensive knowledge of Arabic.[69]

The philological research work of the Nagid brought forth a heated controversy in Arabic between him and the contemporary grammarian Ibn Djanah. Attacks and counter-attacks were exchanged and the tone of both adversaries sometimes became coarse and insulting. While Ibn Djanah honors his opponent with attributes such as oaf, freak, idiot and stammerer, the Nagid, in a recently found fragment, derails the conceit and self-glorification of the grammarian who believes himself to be a great philologist.[70] The occasional attacks of a later grammarian, Ibn Balam, against the Nagid are on the same level. He declared that small children would laugh at the Nagid's research work and on another occasion he compared him to a man who, after reading a single medical textbook, thinks he can stand up to the great Galen.[71] Moses ibn Ezra notes with disgust that the Nagid was attacked sharply for his philological work even after his death.[72] To what extent these disputes were a matter of factual and not of personal differences and idiosyncrasies cannot be ascertained today. It is certain,

66 *L.c.*, No. 26, *cf. Poems of Todros Abu-l-'Afya* ed. by D. Yellin no. 691.

67 According to the words of Yehuda Mosconi; see A. Berliner's *Ozar Tob* (1878) p. 20. lines 10-11.

68 *Cf.* S. Assaf, in *Tarbiz*, vol. iii (1932) 355, vol. vi (1935) 230-33; J. Mann, in *Tarbiz*, vol. vi (1935)69-74; *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, vol. i (1940) p. 630-40.

69 A full appreciation of his achievements in this field is given by P. Kokovtsoff in his Russian book *K istorii srednevekovoi yevreyskoi filologii* (St. Petersburg 1916) vol. ii, p. 74-194, 205-24, 235-36.

70 Kokovtsoff, *l.c.*, p. 85; D. H. Baneth, in *Kiryath Sepher*, vol. ii (1925) 150-54.

71 Poznanski, S., in *Revue des études juives*, vol. vii (1909) 187; Kokovtsoff, *l.c.*, p. 86.

72 *Shirat Yisrael* p. 67; *cf.* also *Diwan*, No. 91, v. 56.

however, that the Nagid made a number of friends among the writers. He helped some of them, such as Isaac ibn Albalya, the scholar and poet of Lucena, Isaac ibn Ghayyath,[73] and above all the greatest poet of his time, Solomon ibn Gabirol.

Father and Son: the "Succession to the Throne"

The Nagid's precocious son Yehosef came to play a significant part in the life and in the poetical work of his father. Samuel had lost one son early in life and he concentrated all his love on his son Yehosef, at the time of whose birth he was already 42 years old. Him he intended to rear as his own successor. The boy inherited the extraordinary gifts of the Nagid and his education was extremely strict. Although surrounded by luxury, he had to work hard to learn within the shortest time possible all that a scholarly Jew and a future statesman was to know. Money was not spared to secure the best teachers in Spain and elsewhere. Yehosef must have had an uncommon memory for in his earliest youth he was already regarded as an authority in Jewish learning. The father supervised his education, even from his military campaigns. Camping far from Granada he would select the Arabic poems which the boy was to copy, or correct his writing exercises, a reward being promised for each filled up copy book.[74] At eight and a half Yehosef began to copy and to collect the Hebrew poems of his father, at the request of the latter. At nine and a half he himself wrote a Hebrew poem; this piece was inspired by the longing for Granada felt by the boy when his father took him along on one of his campaigns.[75] Most remarkable is the fact that the Nagid carried on a poetical correspondence with little Yehosef, not only for pedagogical reasons but because he regarded him as an equal. Despite the great difference in age, he writes to him as to a trusted friend about his joys and griefs, hopes and disappointments. At a critical moment he addresses the following words to the seven and a half year old Yehosef:

> Yehosef, all that I carry and endure
> And all for the sake of which I expose myself is for your sake,
> Were it not for you I would go through the world
> And live like many others in your time.[76]

[73] Ibn Daud, *l.c.*, p. 74.
[74] *Diwan*, No. 63 and No. 96.
[75] *L.c.*, No. 90.
[76] *L.c.*, No. 76, v. 1-2.

As a continuator of the dynasty, the son was thus meant to have an easier life than the father. But was the trouble taken by the Nagid necessary at all? This is an old story: the ambitious father justifies himself before his conscience by claiming that it was only for the sake of his son that he had endured everything. It is brought home to the child at this early stage that he must go much farther than his father; on the other hand, he must not rely on the latters' acquisitions alone but must himself be able to consolidate his position:

> Distinguish yourself and do not rely upon what
> I achieved, self-distinction be your endeavor;
> Be great and surpass the greatness
> Of your ancestors — but do not despise those who are younger.[77]

After the boy has recovered from a severe illness (1044), the father urges him to study with diligence, not for the sake of knowledge alone but for the sake of greatness and in order to dominate others:

> So that you may control the stars
> With your intelligence and rule over princes.[78]

Two years before his death (1054), when the Nagid was already aware that his strength was declining, he addressed an enlightening exhortation to his son. The epistle contains much home-made morality of the kind that might figure in any Arabic collection of proverbs, as for instance the recommendation to remain pious, kind, charitable, industrious and keen to learn. But in the midst of this conventional advice there are sudden flashes of sober counsel derived not from ethics but from personal experience. Such as: you were born rich so give some of your money to others, but do it discriminately and moderately, so that most of it remains in your hands. If another has achieved success and wealth through his way of acting, follow his example and endeavor to acquire the same. Above all, however, the Nagid is never tired of urging his son to practice self-control to a degree verging upon dissimulation. With the king he was to be humble and this would surely raise him in rank. Nevertheless, he was to live sumptuously and enjoy costly food and drink. He was to talk very little and carefully

[77] *L.c.*, v. 15-16.
[78] *L.c.*, No. 86, v. 28.

to weigh every word. He was to treat his enemies as affably as possible, but to rid himself of them at the first opportunity:

> Announce good things to the hater with your lips
> But inwardly beware of his deeds.
> Keep his offences in your heart.
> And when you find the possibility to kill him, do so speedily![79]

Yehosef accepted these directions eagerly and practiced them willingly. His eventual ruin was not ascribable to lack of political acumen on his part but to the impossible situation into which his father had stepped before him.

The Military and Political Career of the Nagid; the Struggle against Ibn Abbas

In compliance with the injunctions of his father, Yehosef had carefully recorded all the poems which the Nagid sent him from his campaigns. We thus possess a unique poetical diary of the wars waged by Granada in the eleventh century. In their gapless sequence, provided with many names and dates, these poems considerably enrich the lore of the historian;[80] for the biography of the Nagid, however, those poems are of primary interest in which he describes not only the campaigns of the army of Granada but his own highly personal experiences.

It is not easy even for a scholar to find his way in the maze of the political and military history of that period. Andalusia had been split into several larger and smaller states, and Arab, Berber, Slav and Christian-Spanish troops took part in the battles. Despite racial antagonism between the Arab and the Berber princes, alliances were not unfrequently concluded between rulers and states of different races. The poems of the Nagid reflect this extraordinary medley, the frequent changes of partners and the treason of former allies. If, disregarding changing associations of the vassal states, we seek to bring out the general trend of this war history, this appears as a conflict between the two largest states of southern Spain, the kingdom of Granada with King Badis at its head and the kingdom of Seville which since 1042 was under the control of the Arab Mu'tadid. Badis, the Nagid's

79 *Diwan*, Third Section: "Ben Qoheleth," No. 403, v. 15-18, 39, 29, 30, 35, 26-27.

80 Two special articles on the historical material contained in these poems are mentioned supra in notes 31 and 33.

master, was a coarse, ignorant and bloodthirsty tyrant, Mu'tadid a fine diplomat but far more unprincipled and dangerous a man than his opponent. He wrote delicate, playful poems about flowers and women but had in his palace a rather peculiar garden which consisted of plants that grew out of the skulls of his slain enemies, a label at the ear of each skull carrying the name of its former possessor. This conservatory, however, was only for ordinary adversaries. The skulls of his most dangerous enemies were kept in a special chest which the Sevillan opened at times in order to revel in the sight.[81] His struggle against the king of Granada appeared to his followers to be a work of God since he fought against Jews. "Your sword has raged against a people which had confessed Judaism although it calls itself Berber," sang one of his adulators.[82]

According to our standards these wars, which because of unfavorable weather conditions were waged only in the summer, were rather primitive in character. When the Nagid tells us that ten thousand soldiers obey him, we may take this statement to be poetic hyperbole. It is certain that the death of a hundred antagonists in the field of battle[83] appeared in those days as a great victory. We may therefore reduce the figures to their proper proportions, but to judge them fairly we must take into account the difficult conditions under which these wars were fought. Military operations in the Andalusian terrain which, with its deep precipices, steep rocks and highly-perched fortified castles so strongly dominates the poetry of the Nagid, must have been a hard test for the skill, the endurance and the courage of the fighters.

The Nagid described in great detail the first two wars in which he apparently participated, probably because they were at the time a completely new experience for him. The first of these wars, against the neighboring state of Almeria, is also fully described in Arabic sources. The army of Almeria was headed by the Slav eunuch Zuhair, who had a remarkable attraction for other eunuchs and, as Abdallah remarks with disgust, the latter gathered round him in swarms. His vizier, the pure-blooded Arab Ibn Abbas, hated the Berbers from the depth of his soul, but most particularly the Jewish minister who had thrown his lot in with theirs in Granada. While Habbus was still alive, Ibn Abbas spread a lampoon against the Nagid, but the king of Granada did not react to it.

[81] Dozy, *Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne* (1932) iii p. 49.
[82] *L.c.*, p. 63.

The change of regime in Granada raised new hopes in Ibn Abbas. In an impertinent letter he called upon Badis to dismiss the Nagid who, according to Islamic law, was not allowed to hold high office nor even to be left alive. Ibn Abbas was even prepared to make the king a present in return for the dismissal of the Nagid. Badis showed firmness in declining the offer indignantly. This meant war and, after a visit to Granada by the prince of Almeria accompanied by his vizier had brought the conflict to a head, the war broke out.

Abdallah tells us that his grandfather hesitated at first to start the war against Almeria. In a dream he saw all the trees fall down in a poplar avenue in Granada and he interpreted this as a foreboding of his forthcoming defeat. Dream interpreters explained to him that in this case the poplars symbolized the eunuchs, for like the latter they produce no fruits, and that on the contrary, his victory was certain. The battle took place on August 3, 1038. The troops of Badis occupied the mountain passes of Sierra Nevada at the village of Alfuente in the neighborhood of Granada, and blocked the way for Zuhair. His defeat was complete; he himself fell in the battle, part of his troops went over to the enemy or were captured, another part was killed in battle or fell from the high mountain rocks. Not content with this, the Granada army invaded the land of the enemy, wrecked its cities and villages and returned home laden with rich booty. The Nagid had the particular satisfaction of bringing home as prisoner his deadly enemy Ibn Abbas. He claims to have captured him himself, but Arabic sources mention neither this personal triumph of the Nagid nor his participation in the battle of Alfuente. The vizier of Almeria was kept in confinement for six weeks and finally Badis killed him with the help of some of his henchmen.[84] Samuel wrote:

> I saw my longing fulfilled on the person of my enemy
> And my revenge on his cursed soul.[85]

The ignominious death of the new Haman, Ibn Abbas, led Samuel to bid his co-religionists to celebrate the day of victory as a new festival of Purim. He relates all these things in his *Shira*, the longest of his poems besides the *Tehilla*, which was to follow the next year.

84 Dozy, *l.c.*, vol. iii, p. 22-29; *Diwan*, No. 10; *Al-Andalus*, vol. vi, 244.
85 *Diwan*, No. 10, v. 125.

Two years after the battle of Alfuente Samuel declared that he had seen in a dream a metric poem which referred to the fall of Ibn Abbas and which predicted the early end of another of his personal enemies. This dream was also to be fulfilled.[86]

The Great Victory over Seville (1040)

While in the struggle against Zuhair the Granada forces were equal or superior to those of their adversaries so that the Nagid was able to speak of their soldiers with the deepest contempt, he was to face a far more difficult task in the year 1040. This time he was up against the awe-inspiring army of Seville led by Isma'il ibn 'Abbad, and his victory over this redoutable warrior seemed to him nothing short of a miracle. Isma'il ibn 'Abbad's hosts may not have counted tens of thousands, as was claimed by the Nagid, but the Granadans were certainly in great jeopardy. The army of Seville pursued them, forced them to join battle along the river Sengil, and the Nagid addressed on this occasion a very fervent prayer to his Creator imploring help. He called upon all his great forefathers to be his spokesmen before God – and the miracle prayed for came to pass! The Nagid gives few details regarding the course of the battle, but we are told of the arrival of troops from Malaga that came to his rescue, of the fall of the Sevillan leader Isma'il, and of the wild flight of the enemy. Several anxious days passed before the Feast of Tabernacles. The Nagid must have seen in this circumstance a particular favor of God in reward for his never having desecrated a religious festival by battle. The great *Tehilla* created at the time is full of jubilation over the victory.[87]

The Siege of Lorca; the Testament (1042)

From now on the Nagid seems to have become accustomed to the new and abnormal life in the field, and not all of his later poems are filled with anxiety as to the outcome of the war in progress. After the first extraordinary successes, he faces combat with ever growing assurance and awareness that God will protect him in the worst of perils. But there are many exceptions. Two years after the victory over Seville the Nagid believed that his life would soon come to an end. The strongly fortified fortress of

[83] *Diwan*, No. 109.
[86] *Diwan*, No. 31.
[87] *L.c.*, No. 29.

Lorca in eastern Spain was being besieged by a coalition of eastern Spanish princes, and the army of Granada was ordered to rush to its rescue. The Nagid spent the night preceding the attack against the besiegers with his troops in the village of Velez. He felt the urge to write to his seven year old son Yehosef, to leave a kind of poetical testament for his comfort in case he should not come back. The situation seemed to him quite uncertain at that moment:

> I wrote it [the poem] while death laughed
> At us with a wide, gaping mouth, and I do not know
> when the enemy rises in the morning,
> Whether he [death] will be destined to our adversaries
> or to us
> And whether it is meant, my son, that
> You will see me no more and that I will not see you.[88]

Once more, with astounding rapidity, the battle was to turn in favor of Granada. The next morning the Granadans attacked and the enemy fled, panic-stricken, into the nearby mountains. The Nagid entered Lorca at the head of his troops and was able to send to Yehosef a song of victory which he apparently entrusted to a carrier-pigeon, the quickest means of sending messages known at that time. Yehosef preserved this poem, which has since become famous,[89] together with the testament written on the previous night.

Two Rescues from Peril and Death

In the following years there were two more wars during which the Nagid had narrow escapes from death. In 1045, in the region of Jaen, he was fleeing from a group of enemy riders who had spotted him from an ambush. With much presence of mind the Nagid jumped into a wide and deep river and escaped in this way, for the pursuers did not have the pluck to jump in after him.[90] Four years later he was again in peril of death. His description is unfortunately not clear enough to enable us to grasp the situation. Apparently, he fell into the hands of the enemy during a battle and was about to be killed. Suddenly and completely unexpected, rescuers appeared on the scene and the enemy had to take flight.[91] All

88 *L.c.*, No. 76, v. 4-6.
89 *L.c.*, No. 77. On carrier-pigeons *cf. Zion*, vol. i, p. 277.
90 *L.c.*, No. 91. *Cf.* verses 6-9.
91 *L.c.*, No. 107. This poem was previously published by D. S. Sassoon in *Me'at debash* (Oxford 1928) 18-21.

these instances of strokes of luck filled him with the deepest gratitude to his Creator. The promise given to him in his childhood dream was fulfilled. How was he to repay this debt? It is characteristic for the Nagid's way of thinking that at the time of his rescue in the year 1049 he decided to write a great halakhic work entitled *Hilkhata gibarvata* as a thanksgiving. He carried out this undertaking and he could justly state in the poem announcing his resolve:

> Who says there is no resurrection of the dead?
> I am a dead man who was fetched from the grave![92]

The Fall of the Berber Princes in Seville

The last years of our poet were filled with protracted fighting in western Andalusia. The fatigue of the campaigns was to be enhanced by worry over an unusual political development. The princes of the small western Berber states, Ronda, Moron and Arcos, endeavored to widen the coalition of the enemies of Granada after harassing the Nagid throughout the autumn of 1053, "for one hundred and twenty days." They scored a measure of success while the exhausted Nagid returned to Granada where he anxiously awaited the approaching trouble. Again he addressed a prayer to his Creator, embittered by the ever renewed attacks of his enemies.[93] This prayer was soon to be answered. The very same winter the Berber princes proceeded to Seville to consolidate their bonds of friendship with Mu'tatid, the arch-enemy of Granada. This treacherous ruler, however, deceived his allies who had come to him as guests. The Nagid confers Biblical titles and names upon the Berber princes – a thing he was fond of doing – and so they appear in his verse as the prince of Ephron, the prince of the Hittites and the king of Jebus. Certain of success, they arrived with proud bearing, in festive pomp, attired in costly raiments. Nevertheless, the Arab ruler of Seville must have realized that he could spare them as his allies. So he had them put in irons and cast into prison after robbing them first. This turn of events appeared as providential to the Nagid; God had dulled the minds of his deadly enemies who, instead of pursuing him, weakened one another. According to a version recorded by several Arabic authors, which may well be correct although it is not confirmed by

[92] *Diwan, l.c.,* v. 100. On this work see supra note 68.
[93] *L.c.,* No. 93.

the *Diwan*, the Berber princes came to a gruesome end in Seville: Mu 'tatid sent them to a large bathhouse, and when they were inside it he had all the exits closed and the heat turned on and increased until all his guests perished miserably. Dozy has given a dramatic description of this outrage worthy of an Italian renaissance prince.[94]

Thus, several of the most dangerous enemies of Badis had been eliminated. But the king of Granada realized by and by that Mu 'tatid's action jeopardized the position in Spain of the Berber princes as such. They were menaced not only as his rivals but as his kinsmen. In a sudden outburst of wrath he decided to have all the Arabs of Granada murdered when they were gathered on a Friday for prayer in the mosque. All the attempts of his Jewish minister to dissuade him from this mad plan proved vain. There was no other course left to the Jew but to warn the Arabs not to visit the mosque on that particular Friday; by so doing he saved the whole country from a great calamity. An Arabic source designates Samuel Hannagid as the vizier who frustrated the plot of Badis; but for chronological reasons this deed can only be ascribed to his son Yehosef, whose diplomatic skill equalled his father's.[95]

The End of the Nagid's Life

The terrific strain and stress of his life affected the Nagid's health and he was old before his time. At 61 he felt completely exhausted and broken.[96] In 1054 he conducted a victorious campaign but returned to Granada seriously ill. In his own words, he was afflicted with a severe skin disease. For a time he was delirious and his physicians were quite helpless. After two months of constant suffering his health improved[97] and in the spring of the following year he was able to wage another war against Seville. This must have been a hard task, for the war did not end at the close of the summer but was carried on the following winter (1055-1056). Once more the old leader moved through the mountains and gorges of Andalusia, stormed castles and fortresses on tops of moun-

94 *L.c.*, No. 138 and Third Section (Ben Qoheleth) No. 28; Dozy, *l.c.*, iii p. 57-58.

95 This story is told by Samuel's contemporary Ibn Haiyan. *Cf.* Dozy, *Histoire de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne intitulée al-Bayano'l-mogril* (Leyden 1848-1851) vol. i, p. 86-88; *idem, Histoire des Musulmans* . . . vol. iii p. 61-62.

96 *Diwan*, No. 140.

97 *L.c.*, No. 141 and 142.

tains and returned with many prisoners.[98] This is the last piece of information offered by the *Diwan;* the Nagid must have died a few months after this last campaign, in the year 1056.

The grief of the Jewish world was tremendous. In Spain the young poet Ibn Ghayyath, whom the Nagid had sponsored, composed an elaborate elegy in Aramaic on the death of his patron.[99] In Egypt memorial celebrations were held in his honor, with funeral and farewell orations.[100] The Arabs were deeply impressed by the sight of the mourning Jews who carried the bier with the body of their prince to its burial place.[101] The Nagid was buried outside the so-called Elbira-Gate, and ten years later his unfortunate son Yehosef was to be laid to rest beside him. This sepulchre was famous for centuries.[102]

In closing, we quote the rather interesting pen picture of the Nagid by his younger Arab contemporary, Ibn Hayyan. The praise of his uncommon gifts is all the more remarkable as it was not written by a friend and admirer:

> This accursed Jew was in himself one of the most perfect men, although God had denied him his guidance. He excelled in learning, endurance, intelligence and wit, charm of character, perseverance, astuteness, cunning, self-control and natural courtesy. He knew how to act according to the requirements of the moment, how to flatter his enemies and remove suspicion from their heart by his fine manners. What an uncommon man! He wrote with two pens [*i.e.* Arabic and Hebrew] and cultivated two fields of learning [the Arabic and the Jewish]. He was passionately interested in the Arabic language, explored it, studied the literature written in this language and investigated its roots [*i.e.* analyzed its grammar]. His hand and his tongue mastered it quite freely, and he used to write in Arabic in his own name and on behalf of his king, applying if necessary Moslem invocations to God and his prophets. He exalted Islam and enlarged on its advantages, so that his letters sounded like propaganda for that faith. He was also proficient in the learning of the ancient [the Greeks], in the various branches of mathematics, and his lore of astronomy surpassed that of the astronomers. He also knew all about geometry and logics. His consummate debating crushed his opponents. As he was wise, he spoke little . . . . although he thought much.[103]

98 *L.c.,* No. 143-145.
99 Published by J. Reifmann in A. Berliner's *Ozar Tob* (1882) p. 5-7, 24-28.
100 Mann, in *Hebrew Union College Annual,* vol. iii, p. 287.
101 Ibn Haiyan, in Dozy's work mentioned supra note 95.
102 *Cf.* Munk, in *Journal Asiatique,* vol. xvi (1850) 201; Dozy, *l.c.,* p. 81, 102.
103 Dozy, *l.c.,* p. 89.